

## BASIC ISSUES

The key issues requiring judgment are:

1. Is the maintenance of non-Communist South Vietnam (under the present or a reformed GVN) of sufficient importance to the U.S. that we should be prepared to continue our current effort for the next 3 to 5 years, or an escalated effort for 1 to 3 years?
2. If not, can we and should we seek to involve ourselves through negotiations in the creation of a government based on some political compromise with the NLF?
3. If we wish to avoid imposing on the GVN and South Vietnam such a political compromise, could we negotiate with Hanoi the end of the phase of massive external military intervention which started in 1965? Could such arrangements with Hanoi be made without bringing about the collapse of the present GVN, but permit a mutual withdrawal of U.S. and NVA forces?
4. Given the success of our current military strategies, do we need to maintain current force levels (549,500 men in Vietnam) to continue present effectiveness, or can we maintain comparable fighting capability at a considerably lower troop level?
5. Should we in any case firmly commit ourselves, accepting the attendant risks, to a continuing withdrawal of U.S. forces over the next several years in order to reduce our own costs and to prod Saigon into negotiating with the NLF and meanwhile taking the necessary steps to increase its own political and military effectiveness?

0 / 11

## ALTERNATIVES

- I. Military Escalation Aimed at Victory.  
Expanded military operations, including ground forces, into Cambodia and Laos, and perhaps increased troop levels and resumption of bombing, aimed at obtaining withdrawal of all NVA/VC forces in 1-2 years, leaving current GVN in power.
- II. Current Military Posture aimed at Victory.  
Continue current force levels and pressures aimed at withdrawal or destruction of all NVA/VC forces and apparatus in acceptable time frame (1-2 years; but perhaps longer), leaving current GVN in power.
- III. Radical Counter-Insurgency strategy aimed at Victory.  
Radical restructuring of U.S. forces into small units in joint command with ARVN, and radical reforms of GVN and RVNAF, aimed at neutralizing NVA and VC Main Forces and destroying VC local forces, guerrillas and apparatus completely in 3-5 years.
- IV. Negotiated Political Compromise.  
Seek to negotiate in Paris a compromise overall political settlement in the South leading to U.S. and NVN withdrawal, continuing present military activities (perhaps withdrawing 50,000 men).
- V. Negotiated Mutual Withdrawal.  
Seek only to negotiate mutual withdrawal with Hanoi (rather than involving the U.S. directly in negotiations for an internal political settlement), withdrawing and deescalating in accord with negotiations and actual situation in the field, but meanwhile maintaining military activities of current type.
- VI. Substantial Reduction of U.S. Presence while seeking Negotiated Solution.  
Withdrawal all but 150,000 troops over next 2 years, while seeking to negotiate mutual withdrawal or political compromise, but making it possible to stay at a lower cost over the long haul.
- VII. Withdrawal of all U.S. Forces in 2-3 years.  
Firm public commitment to withdraw all U.S. forces from SVN in 2-3 years, and meanwhile to deescalate U.S. operations in the South, whether or not a settlement is reached.
- VIII. Quick Unilateral Withdrawal.  
Firm public commitment and actions to withdraw all U.S. forces from SVN within 12 months whether or not a settlement is reached.

## I. MILITARY ESCALATION AIMED AT NEGOTIATING VICTORY

Expand military operations, including forces, into Cambodia and perhaps increased troop levels and resumption of bombing, aimed at obtaining withdrawal of all subversive forces with maintenance of current GVN in 1 - 2 years.

### Beliefs of Advocates

1. Present allied efforts have the enemy on the ropes, but are not sufficient to knock him out. By applying additional pressure now, we can prevent him from recouping and make clear the great costs of continuing aggression.
2. This approach would require a greater U.S. effort in the short term, but will enable us to withdraw more safely in the mid- and longer-term.
3. Because any other alternative would lead, at best, to a confused situation, our allies will support us and U.S. public opinion will tolerate course.

### Military Actions

1. Increase search and destroy operations aimed at seeking out and attriting the enemy.
2. Conduct operations in Cambodia and increase operations in Laos aimed at closing VC supply routes.
3. Perhaps resume bombing of 19<sup>o</sup>, or on previous pattern, or more extensive bombing and mining of Haiphong.
4. Perhaps increase U.S. troop levels to 750,000 or one million.

### Paris

1. Accept GVN lead on procedural matters.
2. Break off talks if Hanoi responds to U.S. expansion by violating the DMZ, attacking cities, or increasing infiltration.
3. Seek to negotiate withdrawal of all Communist forces from SVN with current GVN still in power.



### GVN

1. Emphasize need for stability; support present government.
2. Urge but not demand reforms.

### Cost

1. Budget costs remain at at least \$30 billion/year; could go up to \$40 billion.
2. Casualties increase to 300 or more per week.

### Consequences

1. Some believe expansion will lead to victory in 6-12 months; others believe it will come in 2-5 years. On this view Hanoi should be willing to make major concessions when U.S. escalation becomes evident. Many in Group B doubt that any currently proposed or practically conceivable level of U.S. military pressure will defeat the enemy or destroy his will to the point where he is prepared to withdraw leaving the current GVN in power, unchallenged.
2. Further Americanization of the war.
3. Some danger of greatly increased war with larger participation by China or Russia.
4. Increased domestic opposition.

## II. CURRENT MILITARY FORCES AND STRATEGY AIMED AT VICTORY

### A. Beliefs of Advocates

1. Group A beliefs. *And in addition:*
2. Current levels of U.S. troops, costs, and casualties--at least for the time required to win DRV acceptance of US/GVN victory (variously estimated: from few months to 3-4 years)--are acceptable domestically in the U.S., and justified by international advantages of victory.
3. Viet Cong/North Vietnam cannot carry out or will not accept costs of major offensive to increase U.S. casualties or produce dramatic setbacks to U.S./GVN effort, within next 18 months.
4. Although RVNAF improvement is marked, it cannot justify sizeable U.S. troop reductions in next 12-18 months. "Streamlining" to extent of 50,000 troops might be possible, though even this might have undesirable psychological effects on both GVN and Hanoi.
5. Preferable to keep up current military pressure till assured, verified victory conditions achieved, than to accept prior cease-fire, de-escalation, or major U.S. reduction in forces (even if accompanied by NVA withdrawals).

### B. Military Actions

1. Maintain present U.S. force level.  
Modification: Reduce U.S. forces by limited amount--50-75,000--designed and declared to be merely "streamlining," with no effect on combat role or strength.
2. Continue current military operations: i.e., emphasis on defense of Saigon and other cities; multi-battalion sweeps and cordons; increasing U.S. artillery and air support to RVNAF, and reequipping of RVNAF; military/police efforts against VCI.

### C. Paris

1. Let GVN take lead in negotiations.
2. Insist on victory conditions: i.e., withdrawal of all Communist forces and <sup>opponents</sup> ~~opponents~~ except individuals reconciled to current GVN.
3. Until convinced of DRV/VC intent to abide by victory terms, avoid ceasefire, deescalation, and withdrawals.

### D. GVN

1. Avoid destabilizing pressures on GVN to reform or broaden base; continue <sup>low key</sup> ~~law by~~ encouragement toward these.
2. Assure GVN of continued support and large-scale U.S. military presence till victory assured.



3. Discourage GVN/NLF talks or accession to power of Vietnam elements inclined to major compromise.

#### E. Costs

1. Financial costs continue at current rate of about \$24 billion per year.

2. Viet Cong can continue to impose 200 U.S. casualties a week. (If willing to accept higher casualties themselves, VC/NVA could impose much higher loss-rate on U.S.)

3. If 50,000 noncombat troops removed in 1969 costs reduced by \$1 billion by 1970.

#### F. Consequences

1. Most proponents now predict "victory" achieved in South Vietnam within 18-24 months, with or without explicit settlement with DRV; a few believe conditions already substantially achieved, settlement possible almost immediately. Some who accept assumptions above believe victory attainable but will take 3-5 years (some of these still prefer this option, some prefer escalation for quicker win, others some form of compromise).

2. But others (Group B) reject all beliefs above and believe "victory" unlikely short of 5 years, or possibly ever, by this approach.

3. Most Group B members would sharply question whether current costs were acceptable to the U.S. public over three or more years, even if victory resulted (which Group B does not expect), and especially if "progress" were slow and ambiguous. And they doubt public would expect great progress, so that new Administration would be widely criticized, meanwhile, for "more of the same."

4. Risks: (a) If VC/NVA launch damaging large-scale offensive--even at high costs--most of above assumptions would be dramatically refuted, leaving new Administration with a "Credibility Gap" comparable to predecessor's. (b) If situation is not irreversibly improved, with victory demonstrably near, in 12-18 months, it will have become "Nixon's War," with same bureaucratic/political/diplomatic pressures to persist further as in previous Administration. If meanwhile DRV had made plausible compromise offers, Administration would be condemned for throwing away opportunities--uniquely available to it while still unencumbered by prior involvement--to end conflict.

5. If victory conditions are achieved in 12-18 months, considerable vindication (far from total) of U.S. war policies since 1965. Confidence in U.S. judgment and competence somewhat restored, as expectations of domestic and international critics confounded (though total costs still strongly questioned.) Increased confidence in SEA leaders in continued U.S. support. Perhaps less tendency in some (Thailand?) to change policies in ways that would reduce vulnerability to subversion.

### III. RADICAL COUNTER-INSURGENCY STRATEGY AIMED AT VICTORY

Radical restructuring of U.S. and ARVN into small units deployed with RF/PF throughout populated areas and supported by large reserve system and improved police activities. Emphasis on protecting population and neutralizing enemy political and logistical support system. Enemy units in remote areas harassed but not engaged in major battles. Threat at negotiations that with such changes, U.S. can remain in Vietnam indefinitely and put meaningful pressure on NLF.

#### A. Beliefs of Advocates

1. Low prospects of achieving anything with current strategy.
2. New military tactics and police/intelligence efforts can destroy local forces and guerrillas, while holding off NVA/VC main forces.
3. The enemy, facing unfavorable trends and lacking logistical and operational support by local forces and guerrillas, will find it increasingly difficult to operate and easier for U.S. to identify and destroy.
4. Major changes in U.S. Army required; these will be difficult to achieve at best and may not be attainable. They certainly will require Presidential and Cabinet-level initiative.
5. This approach can win (though not certain); present military course or even escalation cannot. This will surely improve non-Communist bargaining position, while others probably will not.

#### B. Military

1. Military-police actions designed to protect the population and to cut the sources of VC regeneration and NVA logistical support rather than classical military ends of casualties and terrain.
2. Economy of force by concentrating upon populated lowlands and highland district capitals, deferring efforts to drive enemy out of remainder of the highlands. This reduces enemy main force confrontations until after his regenerative and logistical support capacity has been cut.
3. Conversion of the highlands and DMZ area into an in-depth ambush barrier.
4. Requires transformation of part of American combat support and combat service support into target discriminating light infantry, reduced movement, reduced large caliber ammunition consumption, and consolidated fire support and resupply at higher levels.



5. Assign small, but reserve and artillery supported, U.S. units throughout the rural populated areas to bolster a revitalized GVN territorial security system.
6. RF/PF integrated with U.S. detachments for greater effectiveness and better morale, equipment, logistical support, and training. Portions of ARVN combined with American units.
7. Major effort addressed to RVNAF leadership problem: officer selection, promotion, corruption, less dependence on U.S. advisory and support effort.
8. Increased commitment of individual soldier to the GVN.
9. U.S. forces might be reduced under this option by emphasizing reductions in less essential categories of personnel. Possibly as many as 250,000 troops might be withdrawn by end 1969 and more thereafter.

#### C. Paris

1. Avoid U.S. withdrawal or formal cease-fire until victory conditions achieved or strategy proves unsuccessful.
2. Confront DRV negotiators with the threat that the U.S. can remain in Vietnam indefinitely. This threat is made credible by reduction of U.S. forces and reliance upon tactics designed to reduce U.S. casualties.
3. Confront DRV negotiators with threat of destruction of NLF political apparatus by means of new strategy.

#### D. GVN

Overhaul police and territorial security forces: Improve training, pay, etc., and desirably create an effective territorial security force by merging RF, PF, National Police, PRU, and CIDG into a single organization under the ministry of interior.

#### E. Costs

1. Dollar costs after 1970: \$9 billion/year.
2. Casualties are unlikely to be higher than present and should be sharply reduced even if DRV does not reduce its level of support. By concentrating on defensive tactics and emphasizing small unit actions, experience indicates ratio of kills will improve.



#### F. Comments

1. Components of this strategy have been tested in Vietnam with favorable results (e.g., CAP's, CIDG operations, Sting-Ray and "pile-on" operations). Widespread adoption of these tactics in the proposed strategic framework should enhance effectiveness.
2. Great inertia against radical organizational/tactical change in the U.S. military. Top commanders believe that our present tactics have been effective and that we now have tactical military initiative.

#### G. Consequences

1. Requires presence of U.S. forces in Vietnam, although in decreasing numbers, for indefinite period.
2. Presence of U.S. forces at village level throughout countryside may make U.S. presence more visible and provoke an anti-American reaction among populace. (It can be assumed, however, that present mode of U.S. operations -- i.e., large units damaging countryside, blind artillery fire, creation of refugees, etc., -- probably provokes a worse reaction.)
3. Presence of U.S. forces at village level could make extrication even more difficult if the strategy failed.
4. Fearing trends implied by this approach, DRV might either
  - (a) make a massive effort to disrupt it by infiltrating on a large scale and accepting the casualties and the risks of escalation, and/or
  - (b) make seemingly major concessions to preempt effort before VC apparatus suffers too much damage or non-Communist forces become increasingly effective.
5. Provides vehicle for the reorganization of the U.S. effort which allows a troop reduction of 250,000 personnel within a year and further reductions as local security improves and RVNAF becomes more effective.
6. If successful, the innovations in tactics, organization, and strategic approach would be applicable to advanced counterinsurgency problems elsewhere.

#### IV. NEGOTIATED POLITICAL COMPROMISE

Seek to negotiate in Paris a compromise political settlement that would make possible:

- a) a withdrawal of U.S. and NVN troops from South Vietnam;
- b) a policy of peaceful competition among all political forces present in South Vietnam, including the NLF. This would involve either a coalition government negotiated at the conference table prior to new elections in South Vietnam, or elections under proper safeguards, the outcome of which may either lead to a coalition government or to the acceptance of the NLF as "loyal" opposition.

#### Beliefs of Advocates

1. There are sufficient elements of common interest among all South Vietnamese to warrant the search for a formula of political compromise that would create an independent, neutralist, state in the South supported by its principal political forces.
2. There is sufficient interest among all Vietnamese, Communist and non-Communist, in the South as well as in the North, to secure the independence of their nation from external pressures, to make it plausible that a well-conceived plan will obtain the support of the principal Vietnamese political forces.
3. U.S. active participation in the search for a political solution through negotiation in Paris is likely to result in more satisfactory results than if the Vietnamese were left to settle the conflict on their own. The expected outcome of U.S. efforts outweighs the risks involved in the U.S. assuming greater responsibilities for the immediate settlement and indirectly for later developments that may result therefrom.

#### Military Activity in Support of Search for Compromise

1. Adjust force levels and pattern of military operations so as to make it possible for the U.S. to continue negotiations as long as necessary without being forced into unwanted concessions or a hasty settlement by the impatience of the American people.
2. Continue reconnaissance operations and deployment of air and naval forces which would give weight to the threat that we will attack North Vietnam if they fail to make the compromise stick.



### Paris Negotiations

1. Negotiate mutual withdrawal of forces with DRV, on the basis of Article 29 of the Manila Declaration.
2. Encourage direct discussions between the GVN and the NLF concerning the terms of a political compromise (which would involve amendment of Article 4 of the 1967 Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam which prohibits Communism "in any form").
3. Offer suggestions for procedural safeguards concerning freedom of political expression, elections, protection of the rights of political minorities, etc., and possibly American assistance to international arrangements for such purposes.

### Relations with GVN

1. Use our leverage on GVN to induce rapidly a genuine policy of accommodation with all non-Communist political forces in South Vietnam, such as militant Buddhists, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Montagnards, in order to broaden support for the GVN in its negotiations with the NLF. This policy of accommodation should become visible immediately in a reshuffled cabinet which would include public figures who have the confidence of the relevant political groups.
2. Threaten GVN with complete withdrawal of U.S. support (which would immediately raise the specter of a coup against the present team) or even with unilateral withdrawal from South Vietnam, if it does not negotiate in good faith with the NLF and obstructs our efforts to arrive at mutual withdrawal of U.S. and NVA forces from South Vietnam.

### Costs

1. Casualties and budget cost may continue at current level while compromise is being negotiated.
2. After the political settlement is agreed, a cease-fire would probably result, which together with U.S. withdrawal, would reduce cost rapidly (say by \$15 billion).

### Consequences

1. A successful outcome of U.S. efforts would create a new political atmosphere not only in South Vietnam but indeed in all of Southeast Asia and provide the basis for meaningful regional cooperation across ideological boundaries.

2. Sceptics will counter that an option based on a policy of national reconciliation in the immediate aftermath of a lengthy and violent civil war is unrealistic, that it is not likely to succeed because in such circumstances eventual reintegration of the national community can only take place after the initial victory of one side, followed in time by the growth of a new spirit of mutual tolerance, a process that might take at least one generation.

3. Even under relatively favorable assumptions, complex negotiations, and the politico-military maneuvers of the contending factions will oblige us to remain involved at a high level of budgetary effort for a period of between 1 and 3 years.

4. Many contend that the probability of eventual Communist takeover resulting from such a settlement is not only high, but higher than from a settlement determined by the Vietnamese with no direct U.S. involvement. Estimates of how likely this is and how soon it will take place vary widely, depending in part on the precise nature of the settlement, the timing of each phase, our willingness and ability to prevent ARVN from collapsing, GVN capacity to broaden its base and improve its chances over the next twelve months, the true extent of popular support for the NLF (which cannot really be tested under present conditions) and Hanoi's sense of timing.

5. U.S. will assume considerable responsibilities by pressing Saigon to accept a compromise and may have to extend massive support to the regime resulting from such a settlement.



V.

## MUTUAL WITHDRAWAL

This course involves seeking to meet our essential Vietnam objective of repelling external aggression through negotiations of a mutual withdrawal of U.S. and NVN forces from SVN and Laos.

### *Debate* *Advocates* A Assumptions of Proponents

1. U.S. should be prepared to accept a communist takeover in SVN <sup>possible, even probable</sup> as long <sup>eventually</sup> if as NVN role is not too visible in the process.

a. Vietnam is not like Korea, and we cannot hope to build it up as a non-communist bastion even perhaps with the investment of many more years intensive effort.

b. If the transition from present SVN through coalition government (perhaps stopping here) to NLF government is slow, the international impact will be slight.

2. The negotiation of a political settlement <sup>(will require)</sup> will take too long, and will saddle us with too much responsibility for the outcome.

a. Political issues such as elections at various levels and composition of new government will take long time to negotiate.

b. GVN arm-twisting by U.S. would be necessary to wring concessions from our ally. <sup>and</sup>

3. The U.S. public will be satisfied that getting NVN forces out and leaving the rest to the South Vietnamese themselves constitutes an "honorable" settlement.

4. Hanoi may be willing to run the risk of leaving the VC essentially on its own to fight GVN forces, as long as US forces are withdrawing and are unlikely to return. <sup>or to compete politically after a ceasefire,</sup>

a. Hanoi probably would feel that given this alternative, the costs of continuing the war for many years are too high; <sup>compared to</sup>

b. Hanoi's presence is close enough to SVN to hedge its bets in the future.

5. The whole process of negotiations and actual withdrawals could take from 1 to 3 years.

### B Military Levels and Actions

1. There would be a deescalation of the war as soon as the withdrawal process begins.

a. Declaration of cease-fire <sup>is</sup> possible, but unlikely for a while.

2. U.S. forces playing more of a reserve reaction role for SVN forces,
  - a. Providing more needed air and artillery support.
3. GVN forces, with some U.S. support, fan out throughout the countryside to control and have a presence in most populated areas.
  - a. Border areas and enemy bases not challenged.
4. U.S. continues to provide military and advisory assistance to GVN in accord with Phase I and II Modernization Program.
  - a. Under Accelerated Program, SVN forces would have significant manpower and firepower advantage over residual enemy forces.

#### C Paris

1. Press Manila Declaration terms as our essential negotiating position.
  - a. Phased mutual withdrawals from SVN and Laos (not in Manila, but could tie to 1962 Geneva Accords) with full US forces departure six months after all NVN forces and regroupees return to NVN. *(Initially we should ask for withdrawal of regroupees, but would be prepared to concede on this point).*
  - b. Continue to state that all residual violence in SVN after NVA withdrawals will be considered as indigenous.
2. Negotiate bilaterally and privately with NVN as necessary to facilitate withdrawals even at expense of troubled relations with SVN.
  - a. As a practical matter, these talks would include, in addition to withdrawals, DMZ, deescalation/cease-fire, POW's, and Laos.
3. Encourage GVN to talk directly with the NLF to settle all domestic political SVN issues.
  - a. Actual withdrawals of US and NVN forces should stimulate such contacts.
4. Use plenary sessions to formalize agreements reached on dual track basis described above.

#### D GVN

1. Try to maintain good relations with GVN, but not at price of holding up bilaterals with Hanoi.
2. Give encouragement and economic aid, but don't pressure for reforms and concessions.
3. Consider retaining an advisory team even after withdrawals.
  - a. *(This is not precluded by Manila which just refers to "forces", not all personnel.)*



E Cost

*annual*  
~~A ceasefire could yield savings in ammunition, aircraft attrition, and other operating~~

1. ~~No large budgetary savings until withdrawal process is virtually completed.~~

a. Costs still high in aiding GVN forces.

2. <sup>U.S.</sup> Casualties gradually reduced.

*costs of about \$11 billions  
 even if US troops  
 personnel remained  
 in SVN.*

F Consequences

1. GVN forces, even with diminishing US role, should be able to prevent VC overrunning major population centers, *and*

a. ~~Countryside and border areas fall to VC.~~

2. Present leadership structure of GVN would probably change, with degree of communist control determined by reactions of other SVN political groups (Hoa Hao, Catholics, Buddhists, etc.) and cohesion and effectiveness of GVN forces.

3. Some criticism inevitable, but Asian reaction favorable to settlement, especially given the fact that full process took 2 to 3 years.

a. The time and nature of the withdrawal settlement should allow for adjustment stabilization in these Asian countries.

4. As long as it leaked as though the U.S. would effectively be out of Vietnam in 2 to 3 years and as long as Hanoi avoided blatant violations of the agreement, U.S. public opinion would be satisfied generally.

~~If US equipment were given to GVN forces and our air~~

~~forces~~

*If GVN forces replaced US ground troops, <sup>and</sup> ~~except for~~  
~~some Vietnamese~~ ~~and~~ ~~our~~ air forces were reduced by  
 two thirds, <sup>the U.S. budget in support of the war could</sup>  
 be cut to about \$12-13 billion; ~~with de-militarization~~  
 to \$9 billions*

## VI. SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION IN U.S. PRESENCE WHILE SEEKING MUTUAL WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawal of all but 100,000 men over three years, while seeking to negotiate mutual withdrawal. Preferred style of implementation should be joint agreement with GVN on phased withdrawal, based on continuation in growth of RVNAF capability. Substantial lowering of U.S. effort should be tied to readiness to stay for longer haul at reduced scale. Risk of NVA escalation to be deterred or met by (a) resumption of bombing in North with former restraints relaxed, and/or (b) slow-down of troop withdrawal.

### Beliefs of Advocates:

1. U.S. must remain in SVN for next several years to prevent NLF takeover based on NVN military force.
2. Domestic political realities in the U.S., as well as need to motivate improved GVN/RVNAF performance, require a reduction in U.S. forces in the short run. Moreover, a substantial reduction in U.S. forces will make it possible politically to sustain U.S. involvement in Vietnam.
3. Even substantially reduced U.S. forces can prevent an NVN/VC victory though not permit a quick friendly victory.
4. NVN has no incentive to reduce its commitment to the war as long as it believes U.S. support for the war is collapsing. Withdrawal of the U.S. forces will lead Hanoi to revise estimate upwards of U.S. staying power.
5. Favorable outcome depends on improved GVN and RVNAF performance. As long as the U.S. show no firm signs of ever leaving, the GVN has limited incentive to reform and RVNAF limited incentive to increase its effort.
6. Increased assumption of military responsibility by RVNAF will help prevent chances of collapse of U.S. domestic support for war.
7. Advocates of this alternative span a wide range of "optimism" or "pessimism" as to GVN/RVNAF response to U.S. reductions. Either view is consistent with a readiness to consider complete withdrawal if appropriate response is not forthcoming.
8. Emphasis on GVN/RVNAF responsibility preserves credibility U.S. pledge of support against external aggression.



### Military Activity

1. U.S. forces would be withdrawn at the rate of between 100,000 and 200,000/year so that only 100,000 would be left by December 1971.
2. As U.S. forces are withdrawn, the U.S. military effort would be limited to the protection of Saigon, protection of U.S. bases and substantial logistic and combat support for ARVN.
3. Press ARVN to take over major combat responsibilities. Give high priority to ARVN modernization; turn over to ARVN equipment of withdrawing U.S. forces; maintain high level of military aid and reduce U.S. fire support to ARVN only slowly.

### Paris Negotiations

1. Limit negotiations to mutual withdrawal, de-escalation and, perhaps, cease-fire.
2. Seek mutual withdrawal. This alternative is also compatible with seeking compromise political settlement as negotiating option.

### GVN

1. Urge GVN to broaden and reform but not threaten to cut off aid.
2. Consistent with reduction in military presence, U.S. should limit its prominence in non-military aspects as well.

### Costs

1. Financial cost reduced from \$25 billion to \$8-10 billion by December 1971.
2. Casualties decline in proportion to troop withdrawal.

### Consequences

1. U.S. able to stay in SVN for a longer period at reduced cost.
2. Outcome in SVN will depend on whether GVN/ARVN pulls itself together, collapses, or negotiates with the NLF. There is ample room for differing judgment on what will happen.
3. If Hanoi withdraws in response, it would lead to de facto mutual withdrawal.
4. If Hanoi increases its level of effort could result in Communist control of much of SVN. Hanoi may step up its infiltration in an effort to demonstrate

✓ 3  
to U.S. that its alternatives are a high military effort or total withdrawal. Deterrence of this move may depend on readiness to resume bombing in North Vietnam, a slowdown of troop withdrawals, or both.

5. The prospect that the U.S. would find a sizable presence sustainable indefinitely (because it had reduced costs) would press Hanoi to agree to mutual withdrawal, unless it were willing to gamble on "forcing" U.S. out at high costs in casualties.



## VII. Withdrawal of all U.S. Forces in 2-3 years.

From Public Commitment to withdraw all U.S. forces from SVN in 2-3 years and de-escalate its operations in the South whether or not a settlement is reached.

### Beliefs of advocates

1. U.S. domestic priorities require from U.S. commitment to be entirely out of SVN in a fixed time (some believe current level of U.S. effort is sustainable for 2-3 years; others believe that reduced level is sustainable).

2. Withdrawal in 6 months would cause collapse of GVN while withdrawal over 2-3 years will give ARVN time to take over responsibility for fighting (Others believe ARVN will require presence of substantial members of U.S. forces for an indefinite period).

3. U.S. commitment will be met by continuing U.S. involvement for another 2-3 years while providing aid to GVN: communist SVN not intolerable (Others believe US must preclude possibility of Communist SVN).

### Military

1. U.S. forces could be withdrawn at rate of 200,000 a year with all forces withdrawn by ~~January 1970~~ <sup>end</sup> at the latest.

2. As U.S. forces withdraw the U.S. military effort would be contracted and finally limited to defense of U.S. bases.

### Paris Negotiations

1. Press energetically for mutual withdrawal with or without a political settlement.

2. Recognize that U.S. commitment to total withdrawal substantially reduces U.S. leverage.

### GVN

1. Make clear to GVN that U.S. fully intends to be out in 2-3 years.

2. Provide ARVN with all of equipment it can use.

3. Urge GVN to reform but do not threaten to cut off aid.

### Costs

1. Financial cost reduced from \$ <sup>24</sup>~~24~~ billion <sup>a year</sup> not to \$ <sup>7</sup>~~16~~ billion by ~~January 1972~~ <sup>with complete withdrawal (including all air forces) and with de-escalation by ARVN assumed</sup>.

2. Casualties decline in proportion to troop withdrawal.

### Consequences

1. If Hanoi steps up its efforts Communists could control much of SVN before U.S. withdraws.
2. Unless Hanoi withdraws Communist takeover likely after U.S. withdrawal. VC may be able to defeat ARVN even if Hanoi withdraws.
3. If Hanoi withdraws in response could lead to defacto-mutual withdrawal.
4. Paris settlement very unlikely.
5. Outcome will depend on whether GVN/ARVN pulls itself together, collapses or negotiates with NLF.



## VIII. QUICK UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL

This course involves a U.S. decision (publicly announced, now or later) to withdraw all U.S. forces from SVN in one year or less, whether or not an agreement is reached in Paris.

### A. Beliefs of Advocates

1. The war is unwinnable (in acceptable ways). No matter what statistics might indicate or official reporters feel, our efforts cannot resolve the political problems that are at the heart of this war. We should therefore cut our losses and avoid unknown additional risks while we can, and devote resources and energies to other activities elsewhere.
2. The Nixon Administration can successfully explain this course to the American people and other nations, particularly in its early days.
  - a. The American people will be receptive because many are disenchanted with the war, and because many believe that domestic priorities would benefit. (Public opinion has responded favorably to deescalation and has favored escalation only "to get it over with." If no acceptable "get it over with" prospect is in sight, the public is likely to favor unilateral withdrawal.)
  - b. Other nations will accept our action because we have met our commitments by large investment in men and resources, and shown "wisdom" in accepting the situation.
3. It is important to start the withdrawal process now and complete it quickly because otherwise -- with every other option -- the new administration runs a risk of getting locked in (War transferred from Johnson to Nixon Administration rather than from U.S. to SVN).
4. The only way to get the SVN to try to negotiate a settlement with the NLF or to assume the burden of fighting is by credible announcement of actual full withdrawal.
5. Withdrawal "limits damage," saves lives, conserves resources now.

### B. Military Actions

1. U.S. forces are drawn down to zero on a crash basis. (According to logistic estimates, this can be done in a year or less.)

2. U.S. immediately assumes posture suited for redeployment.
3. Equipment turned over to GVN (as much as they are able to use).

#### C. Paris

1. U.S. tries to negotiate for reciprocal NVA withdrawal, using pace and scope of American withdrawal as bargaining counters (but U.S. withdraws in any case).
2. U.S. tries to get cease-fire during withdrawal.
3. U.S. maintains a strong declaratory policy against NVN (and other Communist) aggression and reaffirms U.S. interest in Asian nations willing to help themselves.

#### D. GVN

1. U.S. says it will continue to help present or other non-Communist forces as much as we can. Maintains a small force of technical advisers.
2. U.S. applies no pressure for reforms and is friendly to whatever GVN (or non-Communists in a coalition government) wants to do.

#### E. Cost

1. Fastest and surest way of reducing cost radically.
2. Fastest and surest way of reducing U.S. casualties.

#### F. Consequences

1. Probable collapse of GVN and Communist takeover, but possibility of non-Communist coalition government. (Even a Communist government after collapse not necessarily altogether Hanoi's "stooge.") SVN countryside quickly taken over by VC.
2. Initial concern on part of some Asian nations, but no domino process, except for Laos.
  - a. Laos would probably go Communist quickly and Thais might hedge their ties with us, but would not be severely threatened.



## QUICK FULL WITHDRAWAL

This course involves U.S. public commitment and actions to withdraw all U.S. forces from SVN in one year whether or not an agreement is reached in Paris.

### *Beliefs*      *Advocates* A Assumptions of Proponents

#### 1. The war is unwinnable.

a. No matter what statistics might indicate or official reporters feel, our efforts cannot in the next five years or more get at the political problems that are at the heart of this war.

b. We should, therefore, cut our losses while we can.

#### 2. The Nixon Administration can successfully explain this course to the American people and to other nations.

a. The American public will be receptive both because many are disenchanted with the war and because U.S. domestic priorities require a quick full withdrawal.

(1) Public opinion has responded favorably to every peace move and every act of deescalation by the Johnson Administration.

b. Other nations will understand our actions because we can maintain convincingly that we have met our commitments to our SVN ally by the investment of 30,000 plus lives and the expenditure of \$100 billion.

#### 3. It is important to start the withdrawal process now and complete it quickly because the longer the new Administration retains any forces, the more likely it is to assume an open-ended commitment.

a. It boils down to a choice of doing it now before the new Administration assumes the obligations of the old.

#### 4. The only way to get the SVN to face reality politically by negotiating a settlement with the NLF and to assume the burden of fighting is by the shock of actual full withdrawal.

### B Military Levels and Actions

#### 1. U.S. forces are drawn down to zero on a crash basis.

a. Because of logistical problems this could well take more than one year, but we should aim hard at one.

2. We should immediately pull back our forces to base and embarkation areas.
3. U.S. turns over as much military equipment as GVN forces are able to use.
  - a. (If SVN forces could maintain their cohesion, this equipment would be of significant value.)

#### C Paris

1. U.S. tries to negotiate mutual withdrawals with possibility that Hanoi might be willing to save our face since we would in fact be withdrawing.
2. U.S. maintains a strong declaratory policy against NVN aggression and reaffirms U.S. interest in Asian nations willing to help themselves.

#### D GVN

1. Say that we have helped them directly as much as we can, and that we will continue to provide economic and military assistance.
  - a. We could keep small non-combat advisory group.
2. Apply no pressure for reforms and actions and be friendly toward what GVN says it wants to do.

#### E Cost

1. Fastest and cheapest way to <sup>reduce</sup> approach 1964 levels of Defense expenditures, but still ~~actual budgetary savings~~ would take 1 to 2 years. *Support of enlarged well equipped GVN forces could cost \$10 billion a year if high level of violence continues. With deescalation the cost would be reduced to about \$7 billion.*
2. U.S. casualties go down to zero rapidly.

#### F Consequences

1. Probable collapse of present SVN and communist takeover, but some possibility of a non-communist coalition government.
  - a. SVN countryside quickly taken over by VC.
2. Paris Talks become much less important and are unlikely to lead to a negotiated settlement.
3. Initial concern on part of some Asian nations, but no domino process.
  - a. Laos would probably go communist quickly and Thais might hedge their ties with us.
4. Would be attacked domestically for a pull out, but cannot predict depth or dimensions.